

Introduction



Fall colors at Jumping Off Rock

In the uppermost reaches of northwestern South Carolina, the clear waters of Lake Jocassee splash against the base of the Blue Ridge Escarpment, a "Blue Wall" of hills that represents the sharp transition between the Carolina mountains and piedmont. Forested slopes drop in elevation by 2,500 vertical feet in a matter of one to two miles. The land supports streams with names such as Saluda, Eastatoee, Laurel Fork, Toxaway, Horsepasture, Bearcamp, Thompson, Whitewater and Devils Fork, which carved the rugged gorges, creating scenic waterfalls and other natural beauties. These gorges, their streams and the more than 75 inches of precipitation that occur here each year make this area unique among mountain settings in the eastern United States. It is a place worthy of protection.

Gated residential communities began appearing across the landscape in the 1970s and 1980s and wild lands were being rapidly consumed by development. While some envisioned houses, roads and rooftops for the escarpment and gorges of South Carolina, conservationists Dr. James A. Timmerman Jr. and John E. Frampton of the S.C. Department of Natural Resources had different ideas. Timmerman and Frampton worked closely with business interests and conservation groups in the Upstate to protect the largest contiguous parcel of mountain property ever shielded from development. In the fall of 1998, nearly 35,000 acres of land were purchased by the State of South Carolina for future generations to enjoy and the area was formally named "The Jim Timmerman Natural Resources Area at Jocassee Gorges." The area had been known locally as the "Horsepasture" and is often referred to as "Jocassee Gorges." Jocassee Gorges, along with conservation lands in North Carolina and Georgia, helped form almost 250 square miles of protected forestland associated with South Carolina's Blue Ridge Escarpment and its watersheds.

The name "Jocassee," according to legend, means "Place of the Lost One." Evocative Indian names echo throughout the Jocassee region, such as Oconee and Eastatoee, both tribes that inhabited the area. The Eastatoees were called the Green Birds and likely received their name from the Carolina parakeet, the only parrot native to eastern North America, a species that became extinct in 1904. The Eastatoee Valley was the last site where scientists recorded a sighting of the species in South Carolina.

In 1787, botanist Andre Michaux discovered a "small plant with saw-toothed leaves" that today is recognized as Oconee bell, a rare plant species that is a hallmark of the Jocassee Gorges. It was also the location of many detailed botanical studies in the mid-1900s documented the unique qualities of the Jocassee Gorges region.

During the past century, much of the land was owned and managed by commercial timber interests. The Singer Sewing Machine Company once owned the land and harvested wood to make cabinets for their sewing machines. Duke Energy and Crescent Resources later purchased the lands for energy production and forest management purposes.

In recent years, the area has been the site of important wildlife and fisheries restoration projects involving white-tailed deer, wild turkey, peregrine falcons and brook trout, among others. Today, Jocassee Gorges is managed to provide a wide array of recreational opportunities as well as home to some of the most interesting biological communities in the United States. Jocassee Gorges is not only the legacy of Dr. Timmerman and his contemporaries, but an integral component of heritage for the people of South Carolina.

Many partners, in addition to those already mentioned, helped make the Jocassee Gorges acquisition possible. Among those partnering with the DNR were Duke Energy, Richard King Mellon Foundation, The Conservation Fund, North American Wetlands Conservation Council, S.C. General Assembly, S.C. Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism, S.C. Forestry Commission, Clemson University, S.C. Governor's Office, South Carolina Congressional Delegation, U.S. Forest Service, The Nature Conservancy, National Wild Turkey Federation, the Foothills Trail Conference, Trout Unlimited, S.C. Wildlife Federation and many other groups and private individuals.

Special Points of Interest

Dozens of special places exist among the ridges and hollows of Jocassee Gorges. Waterfalls, rare plants, historic valleys, scenic vistas and sparkling streams are some of the highlights of this mountain property. Some are accessible by vehicle, while others require a hearty jump into the backcountry. Good topographic maps with their place names are essential to successful outings on Jocassee.

Educational Opportunities at Jocassee Gorges

Nestled between the mountain and piedmont physiographic regions of the southern Appalachians, the Jocassee Gorges has unique biological and historical attributes that set the stage for special educational and research opportunities. Institutes of higher education, grade school teachers and others with simple inquiries of the wonders of the natural world will all find something of interest in Jocassee Gorges. Scientific research has established a baseline of information about the diversity of resources within Jocassee Gorges, and that information guides management of the property.

Formal researchers may secure a research permit for approved investigative studies to be coordinated and conducted in the Jocassee Gorges. Interested researchers may visit <http://www.dnr.sc.gov/managed/wild/jocassee/index.htm>.

The diverse and unique natural areas and resources on Jocassee Gorges provide an exceptional opportunity for outdoor classroom style education. From kindergarten to college, students can learn about the unusual geological formations of the Jocassee Gorges, the unique plant and

animal communities that have resulted, and animal efforts to maintain and protect the resources of the area. Opportunities for "hands-on" activities and field excursions by land or boat are possible.

The DNR and conservation organizations conduct educational excursions periodically, and state park interpreters conduct a variety of nature-based programs and walks highlighting mountain resources and culture. For more information about educational opportunities, visit <http://www.dnr.sc.gov/managed/wild/jocassee/education.htm>.

Laurel Fork Falls is perhaps the most popular waterfall within Jocassee. It plummets about 100 feet into Lake Jocassee and is accessible by hiking along the Foothills Trail or by boat excursion on the lake. Laurel Fork Creek, above the falls, offers one of the most pleasant and interesting hikes on Jocassee. Some visitors will note odd patterns of vegetation that innocuously designate old homesteads, where early settlers once lived in the valley. Hidden walnut groves are clues of yesteryear and a way of life that has practically vanished.

Jocassee's forests were once heavily cut for their prized timber, and now it seems that the same forest has attempted to cover up the past. Rusty, twisted narrow-gauge railroad rails used to haul timber may be found in the hollows, buried under a heavy layer of leaves and other organic materials. Cane Creek and Reedy Cove Creek both harbor those leftovers from early life and timbering in the southern Appalachians. Some families used corn, sugar and old-style distillation processes to help fund the family budget. Remains of liquor stills are a common find along clear tributaries of many hollows. Occupants who preceded the early American settlers are thought to have left some traces behind, and the forests of Jocassee have been unable to hide them all. Embedded within the sheer granite slopes of Long Ridge on Pinnacle Mountain are hundreds of oval-shaped petroglyphs, or formations of aboriginal origin, thought to have been created by some earlier civilization. "Yucca," or "Spanish bayonet," is a plant once used by Native Americans in their personal hygiene, and it was transplanted from camp to camp. Small patches of those plants reveal sites that might have once been occupied by the Cherokee.

Botanical delights include Oconee bells, trilliums, showy orchis, wild azalea and trout lily. Carolina hemlocks are present on Roundtop Mountain. The trees are treated periodically by DNR against the plight of the hemlock woolly adelgid that has devastated hemlock trees throughout the region. Roundtop Mountain is accessed via a 2-mile hike on old logging roads off US Highway 178. Oconee bells may be found deep in remote ravines in any of the drainages headed for the Savannah River. Several Oconee bell colonies thrive alongside tiny streams that pass under the Dawkins Flat or Horsepasture Road in the heart of Jocassee.



Oconee bells

Spring and fall seasons offer unparalleled views of the Blue Ridge at its best. Dogwoods, wild cherry, redbud, downy serviceberry and wild blueberry display their flowery brilliance in early spring. The drumming of ruffed grouse rumble across the mountainsides to herald the coming of spring. Oaks, yellow-poplar, red maple, sourwood and hickory take their turn in creating an incredible show in the fall. A range of brilliant, earthy colors can be seen from early October until late November. When the trees have given up their leaves to blanket the earth, new vistas suddenly appear along the "hog-back" ridges that support many of the main roads. The famous Blue Ridge Parkway can be spotted to the north and water bodies such as Lake Hartwell can be seen to the far south on a clear day. The hills of the Georgia mountains are discernible at certain points and one can almost imagine the level, coastal plain of South Carolina on a day of good visibility. Jumping-Off Rock and several other lookout points along Horsepasture Road reveal the immense perspective of the region.

Jumping-Off Rock has been the most popular destination within Jocassee for decades. In February 2008, a pair of peregrine falcons (formerly threatened) was found nesting near Jumping-Off Rock. For a bird of prey that favors cliffs and water, it seemed the perfect place and they successfully raised their young that year. DNR constructed a new overlook at the site to protect the raptors and improve safety conditions in the area. It offers one of the most picturesque sights in the eastern United States and is worth every inch of the 10-mile drive.

Topographic maps, emergency supplies and a little backcountry skill are all helpful for those who seek the treasures of Jocassee. Outdoors enthusiasts are also encouraged to take flashlights, spare tires, a compass or other navigational aids. Old logging roads afford the adventurer literally hundreds of trails and routes to traverse the countryside and it is possible get "turned around" ...as the locals say, maybe for just a few short minutes or possibly for a long, chilly night. The immense forests can offer quite a challenge to even the most experienced adventurer, so it is wise to be prepared.

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Toxaway gneiss, oldest rock in South Carolina

Hiking

Jocassee offers a wide array of hiking experiences. Constructed trails include the Foothills, Palmetto, Eastatoee Creek Heritage Preserve Spur and Twin Falls. Experiences from an easy jaunt to the state's highest point at 3,553 feet atop Sassafras Mountain to a heart-pounding plummet into some of the steepest gorge terrain in the Southeast may be had. More primitive hiking is possible along over 100 miles of old logging roads that have been repaired throughout Jocassee. An occasional Cherokee Indian Trail might be encountered in the backcountry. Crossroads Mountain, hailed as one of the wildest places in South Carolina, offers some remote hiking opportunities and is best accessed through the North Carolina Gorges State Park or by boat in the upper reaches of Lake Jocassee. Opportunities for hiking on the wilder side may be had in the Musterground area along the western shore of Lake Jocassee. Emergency supplies and good maps are essential to successful hiking experiences in the Jocassee Gorges.

Foothills Trail: The Foothills Trail is a 77-mile footpath extending from Table Rock State Park at its eastern terminus to Oconee State Park in the west. The Foothills Trail affords an east-west crossing of Jocassee at the higher elevations. Many sections are strenuous and will test the most seasoned hiker. Other sections are more suited to family outings to catch a glimpse of a hidden waterfall or display of blooming trilliums. Mountain crests with scenic views, shady gorges and coves with special botanical features are all important features along the trail. Along its route the trail crosses or follows most of the major streams and rivers of the Jocassee Gorges and adjacent conservation lands including Eastatoee Creek, Laurel Fork Creek, Toxaway River, Horsepasture River, Bearcamp Creek, Thompson River, Whitewater River, East Fork Creek and Chattooga River, among others.

Activities associated with the Foothills Trail are coordinated by the Foothills Trail Conference. For information about the trail, purchasing a guide book and/or membership in the Conference, write to Foothills Trail Conference, PO Box 3041, Greenville, SC 29602 or visit its website at www.foothillstrail.org.

Palmetto Trail: The Palmetto Trail extends from the Lowcountry to the mountains. It traverses the lower elevations of the Jocassee Gorges and offers exceptional views of the foothills-mountain interface, huge boulder fields, waterfalls and headwater streams. It may be accessed at Beasley Gap on US Highway 178, or at the educational barn facility on the west side of Table Rock State Park. The Palmetto Trail Blue Ridge Electric Co.-on Jocassee Gorges Passage is 12.5 miles in length and crosses a spectacular hardwood ridge, Horse Mountain Ridge. One of the state's



Hikers on the Foothills Trail

most uncommon conifers, the Carolina hemlock, may be seen along the trail on the high, dry ridges. Few campsites are available along the trail, which is limited to foot traffic only due to the sensitive nature of the soils and exceptional water quality in the area. Allow a full day to hike from Table Rock State Park to Beasley Gap on US Highway 178. For more information, visit www.palmettoconservation.org/jocassee.asp.

Twin Falls Trail: Located just ½ mile off US Highway 178 on Cleo Chapman Highway is the trail in to Reedy Cove Falls, which is also known to many as Twin Falls. The trail follows the contour of the land about 1 mile in to the top of the falls. The trail is moderate in difficulty and requires at least two hours for a leisurely round-trip hike. The trail passes old railroad tracks from logging in days gone by. Remnants of the old tracks are buried in the organic layers of the forest, and one might notice the occasional rail or spike along the path. Just above Twin Falls, the old narrow-gauge rail may be seen in tangled mass, the result of a flood that took place in the early 1900s. A faint anglers trail may be followed upstream to some relaxing spots along Reedy Cove Creek.

Fishing

Jocassee Gorges contains some of the highest quality water in the state, and excellent trout fishing opportunities exist. Since acquiring the property, DNR has worked diligently to improve water quality, trout streams and the species that depend on cold, clean waters. Backcountry fishing opportunities are here for those who enjoy fishing smaller streams or those who prefer reservoir fishing for trout, largemouth bass, smallmouth bass and sunfish, since Lake Jocassee is centered within the Jocassee Gorges.

from pull-in RVs for the weekend camper to rugged backcountry camping for the avid backpacker. Jones Gap, Oconee, Table Rock, Keowee-Toxaway, Devils Fork and Caesars Head State Parks all offer camping at designated sites. Some have attractive cabins for rent as well.

Many state park camping areas include individual water and electrical hookups, except for overflow and tent camping picnic tables; comfort stations with toilet facilities and hot showers (winterized comfort stations are available in most parks); and dump stations for RVs. For information about a specific park's campsites and reservations, call 1-866-345-7275 or visit the South Carolina State Parks website at www.southcarolinaparks.com.

Bird Watchers at Jocassee

Habitats that harbor different species of birds. During the breeding season, the persistent song of the red-eyed vireo can be heard from ridgetop to deep cove. As with most species in this forest, more will be heard than seen. Species that may be seen or heard on the drier slopes and ridges include ovenbird, summer tangers, solitary vireos, pine warblers, black and white warblers, wood thrushes, warblers and Eastern towhees. In the numerous coves, black-throated green warblers, scarlet tanagers, hooded warblers, yellow-throated vireos, Northern parula warblers and American redstarts are some of the more colorful members of the songbird community that may be observed.

Clemson University has documented numerous nests by Swainson's warbler, especially in the Eastatoee Creek Heritage Preserve and Side-of-Mountain Creek areas. The species takes advantage of the mid-story nesting cover provided by young Eastern hemlock saplings. Ravens are one of the hallmarks of the mountains. Although they are typically found in the higher North Carolina mountains, it is not unusual to see or hear them in the Jocassee area.

Reedy Cove and Laurel Fork creeks were re-engineered in 2006-2007 and their natural characteristics were restored. The water source for Reedy Cove Creek was managed to lower the stream temperatures as the water passes through Jocassee on its way to Reedy Cove, or Twin Falls.

Management on Jocassee emphasizes improvement of water quality. Old logging roads have been re-graded, stabilized and repaired to reduce sedimentation, erosion and stream impacts. Old roads have been opened to allow fisheries biologists access to several streams to conduct aquatic inventories and implement aggressive trout management. Some streams recently received the first trout stockings in years due to the improved access.

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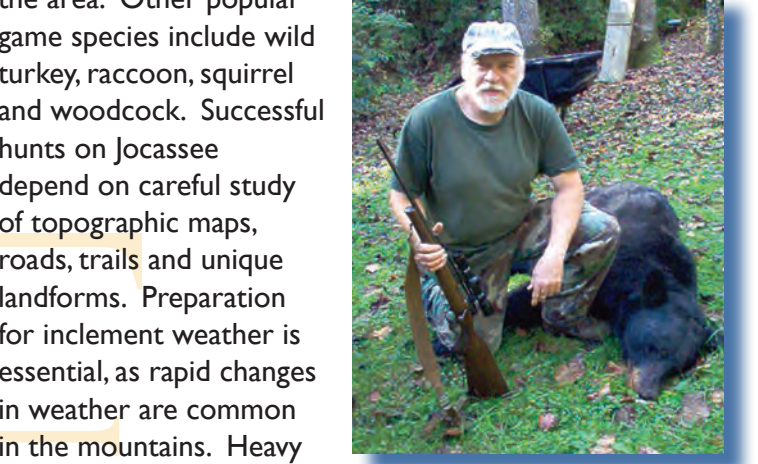


Fly fishing along Little Eastatoee Creek

Laurel Fork Creek is one of the main streams that flows into Lake Jocassee and creates the most impressive and popular waterfall on the lake. The stream has undergone a series of alterations during the past 80 years with different owners. It has been straightened, piped, filled, lifted and manipulated in many ways. In 2007, over 3.5 miles of the stream were treated and repaired. Natural functions and processes were restored. Some sections of the stream are fairly easy to access for families and children, but other sections require longer hikes. The Foothills Trail follows Laurel Fork Creek and has some attractive campsites for the angler who wishes to stay overnight.

Hunting

Jocassee Gorges offers one of South Carolina's best opportunities for hunting game species that inhabit mountainous backcountry, especially black bear. South Carolina's mountain bear population has a stronghold in this land of vast forests and rugged terrain. The carrying capacity of the habitat for white-tailed deer is relatively low; however, a number of nice bucks have been harvested in the area. Other popular game species include wild turkey, raccoon, squirrel and woodcock. Successful hunts on Jocassee depend on careful study of topographic maps, roads, trails and unique landforms. Preparation for inclement weather is essential, as rapid changes in weather are common in the mountains. Heavy rains can be expected at most any time of the year. Crisp, cold days are the norm at the higher elevations during winter.



Bear Hunt

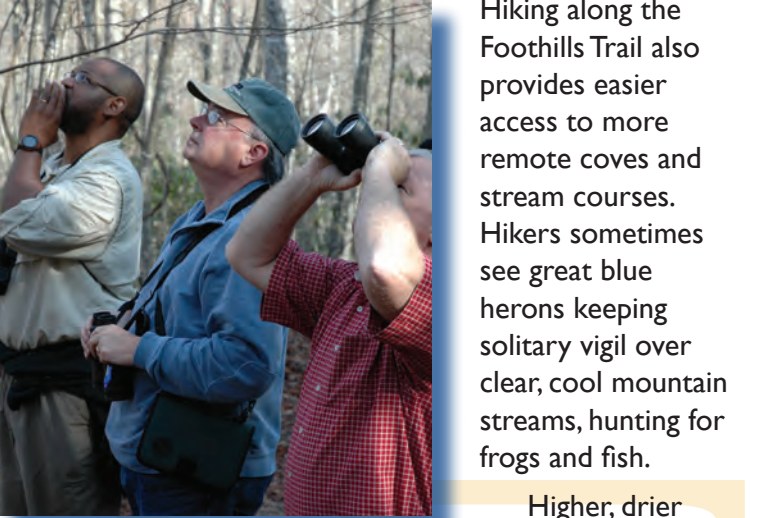
Many adjacent lands that are owned by the S.C. Forestry Commission, US Forest Service or Duke Energy are enrolled in the DNR Wildlife Management Area (WMA) program and are available for public hunting. Traditionally, the area has been a favorite destination for hunters who consider the rugged, picturesque terrain an advantage rather than a hindrance. The actual taking of game does not necessarily define success on Jocassee. Hunters who venture off the beaten trails will find hidden waterfalls, trees marked and clawed by bears, quiet coves and perhaps the remnants of logging railroads from days gone by. Those things are the real treasures within Jocassee Gorges.

Hunters should consult the S.C. Department of Natural Resources' annual "Rules & Regulations" publication for specifics (<http://www.dnr.sc.gov/regulations.html>).

Bird-Watching

The southern Appalachians provide unique opportunities for bird-watching. In 2006, Jocassee received global recognition when it was designated as part of an Important Bird Area by Audubon and Bird Life International. Although the South Carolina mountains rarely exceed 3,000 feet, they harbor bird populations unique to the state and add an important component to regional biodiversity. This is especially true of the Blue Ridge Escarpment, where the mountains abruptly grade the foothills. Here, a mixture of mountain and lower-elevation species can be found.

Hidden coves and darkened stream courses in the area attract many serious birders in search of species like the Louisiana waterthrush or Swainson's warbler. Horsepasture Rocks large overlooks are perfect for "birding" and the old road transects a wide variety of habitats that harbor different species.



Higher, drier habitats and moister coves provide a unique variety of habitats that harbor different species of birds.

During the breeding season, the persistent song of the red-eyed vireo can be heard from ridgetop to deep cove. As with most species in this forest, more will be heard than seen. Species that may be seen or heard on the drier slopes and ridges include ovenbird, summer tangers, solitary vireos, pine warblers, black and white warblers, wood thrushes, warblers and Eastern towhees. In the numerous coves, black-throated green warblers, scarlet tanagers, hooded warblers, yellow-throated vireos, Northern parula warblers and American redstarts are some of the more colorful members of the songbird community that may be observed.

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In February 2008, the second known pair of nesting peregrine falcons in the state was discovered in Jocassee near the famed overlook, Jumping-Off Rock. Monitoring revealed that the Jocassee peregrine falcons contributed a pair of offspring to the Blue Ridge Escarpment. This represented a landmark contribution to conservation in South Carolina.

Obviously, the bird watching opportunities at Jocassee are nearly endless. Who knows what remains to be discovered in the coming years? Bald eagles soar the skies above Lake Jocassee and perhaps a new eagle nest will be discovered in the future.

Wildlife

Jocassee Gorges is home to a number of wildlife species that are not readily found in other parts of the state. Such animals range from chipmunk and mink to black bear. Healthy populations of more common animals such as raccoon and white-tailed deer are also found here. Bobcats are one of the larger predators in the area. They are seldom seen, but their sign can be found scattered across the landscape, often on old logging roads. Lake Jocassee, managed as a put-grow-take trout fishery, supports trophy-sized rainbow and brown trout, and a self-sustaining population of smallmouth bass, besides other warm-water species of game fish. Brook trout, the only species of trout native to the eastern United States, sustain viable populations in the headwaters of certain streams within the Jocassee Gorges area.

Bald eagles, both mature and immature, can be observed over Lake Jocassee throughout the year, although no nests have been discovered to date. Peregrine falcons were identified for the first time in decades and they successfully nested in 2008. The peregrines represent an important addition to the resources found on Jocassee, and they should return to nest every year. Ruffed grouse, another species unique to the mountains, can be heard drumming on the hillsides in springtime. Wild turkeys inhabit the forests of the gorges, and the visitor may chance to observe a group of these secretive birds gliding high overhead from one ridgetop to another - a unique and thrilling sight. Many resident and migratory songbirds occupy habitats on the area. With dry ridges, wet hollows and a variety of vegetative types, as well as elevations that range from about 1,000 feet to over 3,500 feet above sea level, many birds, mammals and reptiles find areas to live here.

Common loons, large diving birds, overwinter on Lake Jocassee and remain through April when they have attained their summer plumage. At this time they can be heard giving their beautiful calls that are typically heard only in the lakes and marshes of the northern United States and Canada.

The abundance and diversity of salamanders are unique to the Jocassee Gorges area and include numerous species of "spring lizards" (the dusky salamanders) that live along stream edges, to brightly colored species that inhabit the forest floor, to uniquely adapted species, like the rare green salamander, that live in the crevices of rock faces. The wood frog, more commonly known in the Great North Woods, breeds in the Jocassee area in winter during the first mild rain. Their loud, nonmusical calls can be heard in the winter woods.



Green salamander

Camping in and around Jocassee Gorges

Camping opportunities on Jocassee are numerous. They range from family type destinations that are accessible by vehicle to remote, leave-no-trace spots that test the limits of physical exertion. Some campsites are located on high mountain ridges, while others are situated in the valleys, closer to water.

Camping is permitted (first-come-first-served) at designated campsites along the main roads in Jocassee Gorges. Designated sites are noted on this map and on kiosks at each entrance. Many of those sites are places that were traditionally used as hunt camps in the past. When the main roads and gates are closed in late winter and summer, primitive camping is permitted anywhere on Jocassee; however a written permit must be obtained well in advance. Permits are not required for primitive camping any time of year along the Foothills Trail, Eastatoee Creek Heritage Preserve Spur or the Palmetto Trail.

Camping is not permitted on the shore of Lake Jocassee, except for the Double Spices Primitive Campground operated by Devils Fork State Park. The state parks surrounding the Jocassee Gorges offer everything

from pull-in RVs for the weekend camper to rugged backcountry camping for the avid backpacker. Jones Gap, Oconee, Table Rock, Keowee-Toxaway, Devils Fork and Caesars Head State Parks all offer camping at designated sites. Some have attractive cabins for rent as well.

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Primitive camping opportunities are available along the 77-mile Foothills Trail, which intersects the interior of the Jocassee Gorges tract. This trail and its spur link Oconee, Table Rock, Caesars Head and Jones Gap state parks along with DNR-owned Laurel Fork Heritage Preserve and Eastatoee Creek Heritage Preserve. Access points are along SC 11, SC 107, US 178 and SC 130. For additional information about the Foothills Trail, contact the Foothills Trail Conference by visiting its website at www.foothillstrail.org.

Surrounding national forest lands provide a wide range of camping opportunities, from developed campgrounds to primitive camping opportunities. To find out what's available, call the Andrew Pickens Ranger District in Mountain Rest at (864) 638-9568.

Resource Management

Jocassee Gorges was protected because of its incomparable size, position among other conservation lands, its unique biology and because of the opportunities it offered for recreation. DNR emphasizes the use of techniques that result in minimal disturbances to the soils, topography and building blocks of the landscape. Management activities are designed to embrace the concept of ecosystem restoration, where critical resources are considered in all management decisions.

The DNR keeps a detailed database on the distribution of sensitive resources, especially rare flora and fauna, as well as historical sites. A Geographical Information System is used to compile old and new records of special elements as well as the soils and other resource variables on the land. Managers consult this database during all land planning exercises and road management activities.



Prescribed burning

Existing roads are maintained for different levels of use. Main roads are used for seasonal public access, while secondary roads are stabilized and maintained to allow non-motorized travel. Important ecotones, or the zone where two habitats intersect, exist along the roadsides and provide important habitat values for many species of wildlife. The mountainous road system requires vigilant care, thus the roads require significant dedication and management attention.

Prescribed fire is one of the most useful tools to promote ecosystem restoration. Managers carefully apply fire on Jocassee to allow the woodlands to gradually change and recover; in terms of plant species diversity, distribution and composition. Most of the woodlands were altered dramatically during the past 100 years as the result of unprofessional timber harvests. Fire was historically an important factor in the natural landscape, and the DNR uses controlled fire to mimic the natural processes that once occurred in order to help the fire-dependent plant communities exist once again. Fire has a very low adverse impact on soils when used correctly. Vegetative changes will take place slowly and gradually, and evidence of such management may easily be seen along the central portions of the Horsepasture Road.

Management decisions favor resource conservation over potential impacts from recreational activities. The balance between recreation and conservation of sensitive resources is a constant challenge on Jocassee, and future generations will be grateful for the extra efforts taken to maintain a fair equilibrium. Explore the area to discover some of the changes that are taking place.

Botanical Areas

Jocassee offers some of the best opportunities to seek and discover interesting plants in the South Carolina mountains. A number of hard-to-find floral species are hidden in the Jocassee Gorges. Popular wildflower excursions include trips into Peach Orchard Branch, Wadako Mountain and Upper Cane Creek.

Peach Orchard Branch is on Cleo Chapman Road, about 1 mile off SC Scenic Highway 11. Convenient parking spots include a wide bend in the road at Peach Orchard Branch Road or the Bug Mountain Angler access point on Eastatoee River. Hikes on old logging roads follow interesting meanders along the river bottoms as well as the high ridges. Showy orchis, lady slippers and different species of trillium are common in the area. Early hikes between February and April pay special dividends to the naturalist seeking the ephemerals, or flowering species that quickly appear and display their showy flowers before the hardwoods turn their leaves for the summer.

Wadako Mountain is one of the most botanically diverse places in South Carolina. Wadako harbors a wide variety of herbaceous and woody species only recently documented by dedicated scientists. The soils in the area lack the typical acidity associated with moist soils in the South. Circum-neutral soils with pH in the 6.0 to 7.0 range allow the existence of plants that are rarely found anywhere else in South Carolina. Yellowwood trees are some of the treasures to be found by those who travel the distance to access the area. Peach Orchard Bottoms off Cleo Chapman Highway and the Howell Mountain Area off SC Scenic Highway 11 both provide good access points for reaching the Wadako area.

Another favorite place for wildflowers is upper Cane Creek. The easiest way to reach upper Cane Creek is to actually follow Mill Creek to its head in the mid-section of the Eastatoee Valley. Take Mill Creek Road off Cleo Chapman Road and park at the red gates at the end of the road. Use the map to explore Cane Creek, where Oconee bells are among the many unusual floral species to find.

Access and Overlooks

Jocassee has about 35 miles of seasonally open roads. Most of the main roads are open from March 20 to May 10 and again from September 15 to January 15. Chestnut Mountain Road begins on NC Highway 281 near Sapphire, North Carolina, runs through the NC Gorges State Park, down to Crossroads Mountain in South Carolina, and is open year-round. A 3.7-mile section of Horsepasture Road is open from US Highway 178 to the southeast corner of the Laurel Fork Heritage Preserve year-round. The Horsepasture Road passes through the heart of Jocassee Gorges and several overlooks were developed along the



New York ferns along Whitewater River

Driving the Jocassee Gorges



- 1) Begin the driving tour at the Jocassee Gorges Visitor Center at Keowee-Toxaway State Park, at the intersection of SC 11 and SC 133.
- 2) From the Jocassee Gorges Visitor Center, turn right on SC 11, and drive 3 miles to a sign for Devils Fork State Park on the banks of Lake Jocassee. Turn right here, and follow the signs about 4 miles to the park.
- 3) Back out on SC 11, at 6 miles from the Visitor Center, turn right (north) on SC 130 toward Whitewater Falls. After traveling 9 miles on SC 130, turn left on the Southern Highroads Trail, a road that cuts across to SC 107. You'll go about 2 miles up this road to find on the left an outstanding overlook of Lake Jocassee. To reach the Wallhalla State Fish Hatchery from here, continue west a short distance to SC 107, where you turn left and in 2.4 miles reach the hatchery entrance.
- 4) Continue on SC 130 from the intersection with Southern Highroads Trail for about a mile until reaching Duke Energy's Bad Creek Hydro Project on the right. At the entrance to Bad Creek, pull up close to the gate, and it will automatically open during daylight hours. After 2.5 miles on this road, turn left into the Whitewater River/Foothills Trail parking lot. Leave your car here and take a 6-mile hike to join the Foothills Trail or one of two spur trails: Coon Branch Natural Area or Lower Whitewater Falls. Drive down the Bad Creek Road for another mile and a half to the Bad Creek Overlook.
- 5) Travel back up Bad Creek Road to SC 130 through the gated entrance and turn right. Very quickly you will cross into North Carolina, where the road changes to NC 281, and soon after that, look for the entrance to Whitewater Falls on the right. With a drop of 411 feet, Whitewater Falls is the highest waterfall east of the Rockies.
- 6) Back on NC 281, head north and in about a mile cross the Whitewater River; the first of the four major rivers that empty into Lake Jocassee (the others being the Thompson, Horsepasture and Toxaway rivers).
- 7) In another 4 miles on NC 281, cross over the Thompson River, the only major tributary of the Jocassee Gorges without a bridge. The river goes under the road through a culvert. About 1 mile beyond the Thompson River, cross the Horsepasture River. In 1986, 4.2 miles of this stunningly beautiful river, from NC 281 downstream to Lake Jocassee, were named a National Wild and Scenic River.
- 8) Back on US 178, it's about 2 miles you will reach the entrance to Gorges State Park on the right. This is also the access point for Crossroads Mountain, the northernmost portion of Jocassee Gorges lands in South Carolina.
- 9) From the Gorges State Park entrance on NC 281, it's about another mile to the intersection with US 64. Turn right (east) on US 64, toward Brevard and Lake Toxaway. Cross a bridge spanning the Toxaway River in about 3 miles.
- 10) Travel another 6 miles to the Eastern Continental Divide at 2,964 feet in altitude, an extensive stretch of high ground from where the river systems of the continent flow in opposite directions. A short ways down the road, turn right onto Frozen Creek Road. Follow Frozen Creek Road for about 3 miles to the Gorges State Park Frozen Creek Access Area on the right.
- 11) From the Frozen Creek Access Area, continue south on Frozen Creek Road for about 2 miles until reaching Old Toxaway Road (SR 1139). Turn left and continue for another 4 miles until this road intersects with US 178. Turn right here (right goes to Pickens, left goes to Rosman, NC) Follow US 178 for three miles and again cross the Eastern Continental Divide.
- 12) Three miles after crossing into South Carolina on US 178, turn right onto a gravel road just before the bridge that crosses Eastatoee Creek. Look for a brown sign with binoculars, which marks the location of a Watchable Wildlife site. Bear right on the upper gravel road, Horsepasture Road, not the lower paved road. Drive 2.0 of a mile to the Foothills Trail parking area on the left. To reach Eastatoee Creek Heritage Preserve, walk past the steps ascending to the Foothills Trail and go a couple of hundred yards farther down the road to the trailhead on the left, at a red gate.
- 13) Back out on US 178, continue south for 1 mile into the small community of Rocky Bottom. Turn left onto EVan

